

NJ Transit blames WWE after thousands of WrestleMania fans stranded in the rain

nj.com/news/2019/04/nj-transit-blames-wwe-after-thousands-of-wrestlemania-fans-stranded-in-the-rain.html

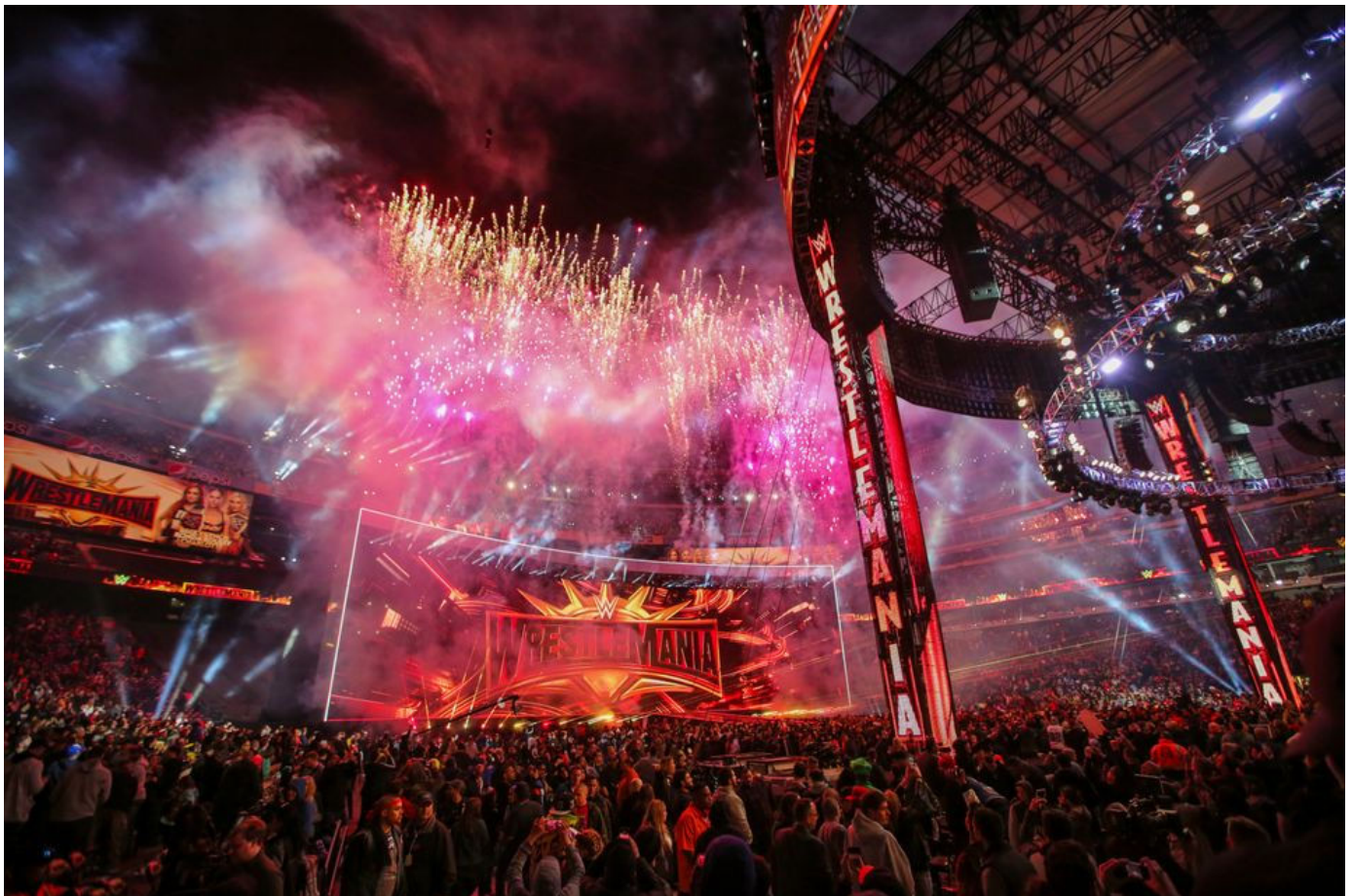
By Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

April 8, 2019

Wrestling fans who had long waits for NJ Transit trains after WrestleMania 35 ended were smacked down by the event's later-than-planned ending time, agency officials said.

In a statement apologizing for the delays, NJ Transit blamed WrestleMania's 12:30 a.m. end time, which it said was two hours later than the planned 10:30 p.m. end time. Because of federal regulations, officials said, the agency was not able to have train employees work overtime to staff additional trains.

"The primary factor contributing to the post-event delays was the WWE's decision to extend the event to 12:30 a.m., which had significant operational impacts on the evening. NJ Transit was not informed of this decision until late last night," Jim Smith, a spokesman, said in a statement Monday morning.



Wrestlemania 35 fans let NJ Transit have it after fans were left waiting for hours in the pouring rain for trains.

"The decision to extend this event resulted in our inability to operate some of those trains due

to federal requirements limiting train crew hours," Smith said.

But WWE officials said mega events don't run on a schedule, like a train.

"Just like other sports and entertainment events, we do not advertise an end time," the WWE said in a statement.

During an unrelated Monday morning news conference in Neptune City, Gov. Phil Murphy agreed that the event let out later than expected and that three of the train crews were "timed out."

But Murphy blamed NJ Transit for not communicating well enough with riders.

"At the end of the day, if folks are frustrated, they ought to be," he said. "I would have been crazed if I were standing on that."

"By the way, I'm told they weren't communicated with. They weren't told what was going on," Murphy added. "And it's completely, utterly, dog-ate-my-homework unacceptable."

"We're fixing it," the governor said. "We're gonna learn from this. I'll be damned if it happens again."

Murphy said he planned to meet with NJ Transit Executive Director Kevin Corbett about what happened.

NJ Transit officials said federal regulations limiting the number of hours a day train service employees can work tied their hands.

WWE officials apologized, saying they "regret any inconveniences fans may have experienced with mass transportation after the event."

Geez @NJTRANSIT @MetLifeStadium @WrestleMania @WWE you had thousands of people waiting in the rain for 3 hours for trains that were ridiculously delayed. Uber also impossible.

We're your fans, some traveled far to be here. Please do better next time. @Deadspin @cagesideseats
pic.twitter.com/H89wRNv8kp

— sherri nienass littlefield (@nienass) April 8, 2019

NJ Transit's pre-event plan called for using six train sets after the event until approximately 1 a.m., based on the WWE's initial event schedule, Smith said. By the end of the evening, NJ Transit moved more than 12,000 customers from MetLife Stadium, he said. The two-track rail line can only move a maximum of 13,000 people an hour.

The agency said it did make some adjustments to accommodate the late riders.

"Last-minute adjustments, such as holding the final trains of the night and adding several additional trips between Secaucus and Penn Station New York by utilizing crews and trains from throughout the system, were made," Smith said.

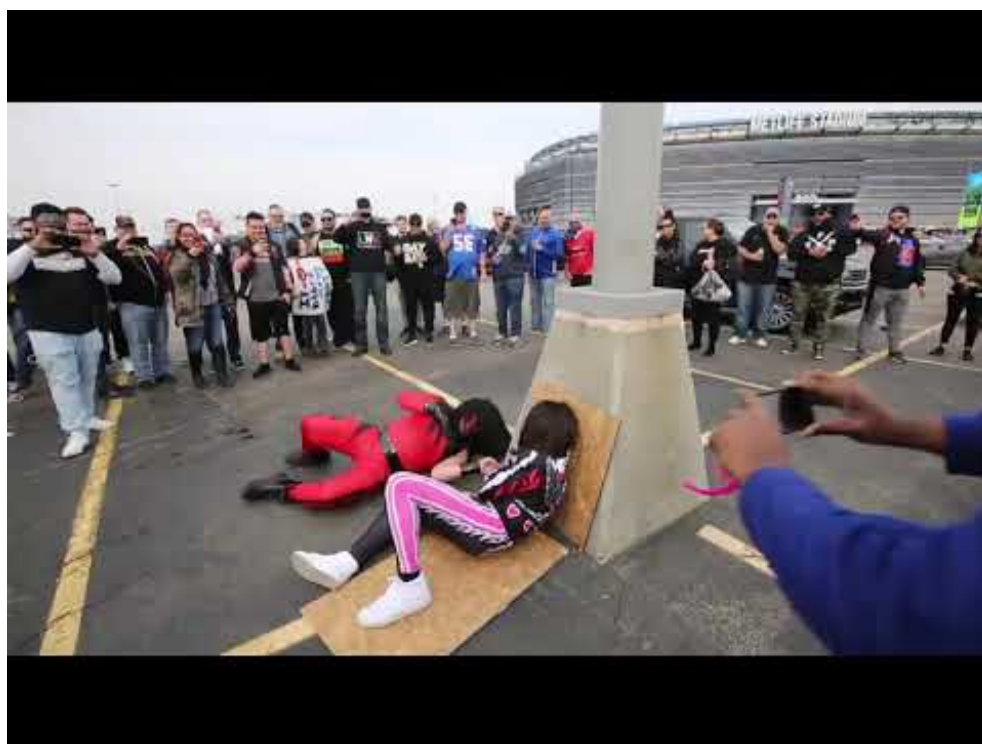
Fans complained of long waits for trains from MetLife stadium after WrestleMania 35 ended. Rain added insult to injury, prompting chants of "no train, we riot." Some fans also blamed the WWE for ending the show after midnight, instead of earlier as happened at past events.

"NJ Transit's top priority is always the safety of our customers and employees. We regret the extended exiting time some customers experienced," Smith said in the statement.

It's different during football games. Plus games do not end after midnight. The WWE dropped the ball with the large card. When I was at MetLife for 29, the show ended at eleven and leaving was a breeze. This is more WWE's fault than Uber and NJ Transit.

— Jorge (@hip_hip_jorge) April 8, 2019

World Wrestling Entertainment officials said 82,265 fans attended Sunday's event at MetLife Stadium, just 264 less than the 82,529 fans attending Super Bowl LXVIII there five years ago.



<https://youtu.be/nfXgvmUNDNk>

NJ Advance Media staff writer Brent Johnson contributed to this report.

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